

OS4 Beta

I have had my AmigaOne since January of 2003 and have played around with it some with SuSE Linx and WinUAE. In the Fall of 2003 I signed up to become a Beta tester so that I could get a feel for what was coming and also so that I could demo it at our club meetings. Suffice it to say that I had some problems and have just recently gotten to the point where I have a beta version of OS4 up and running. This is not the beta version to be distributed to all of the early-bird purchasers of AmigaOnes.

My AmigaOne system consists of a 600 MHz G3, 512 megabytes of memory, and a Radeon 7000 graphics card. This system is running Workbench release 4.0 version 50.2 and Kickstart release 4.0 version 50.39. My classic system is an Amiga 4000 with a 50 MHz 68060 and 128 meg.

My classic Amiga does not have a graphics card in it and is usually running multiscan productivity screen mode with a 640 by 480 resolution with 32 colors. So the first thing that really jumped out at me when booting into OS4 is how crisp and sharp the display is. This is with the A1's screen mode set to 800 by 600 with 64K colors.

One of the first things that I did was to create three directories and copy into them the contents of my three primary partitions from my classic Amiga. I also created hardcopies of my user-startup file, shell-startup file, and the contents of the l:, libs:, and sys: directories. I then began trying things and attempting to get the A1 running like my A4000 by editing the user-startup and shell-startup files and copying missing stuff into the appropriate directories.

I had heard of the 68000 emulator called Petunia. Petunia is apparently integrated into OS4 at a very low level in that if I was not

aware of it, I would never know that it was there. OS4 and classic executables run seamlessly. Unless you know the executable's origin, it is difficult if not impossible to tell what kind of executable is running.

Of course not all classic applications continue to run on the A1, most frequently games and animations. What happens when you try to run one of these? The result is usually one of two things. Either the display goes into some sort of weird state trying to emulate something which it can't or The Grim Reaper appears. The Grim Reaper is the replacement for the Guru Meditation screen. It is a window which gives you a summary of the error that was encountered along with four gadgets allowing you to choose Kill, Reboot, Continue, or More.

How fast is it? Screens open up and refresh much faster than my A4000. On my A4000 I have a script file which executes a Fortran program which reads about 50 files, crunches some numbers, and writes about 100 files. This script runs twice as fast on the AmigaOne — and remember that the executable is being emulated by Petunia.

You can reboot OS4 in the usual way with the three fingers salute via the Ctrl key, left dark side key, and right dark side key. This is strictly an Amiga function and works when OS4 is up and running. It does not work early on when u-boot is in control. When OS4 is booting you can hold down both mouse buttons and be placed in the Amiga Early Startup Control screen. The first item at the top of the screen says

to press a key to toggle display between NTSC and PAL. I have not tried this yet. There is a gadget to take you to the Boot Options screen where you can choose the device to boot from and even shows boot priorities. There is a Display Options gadget which is ghosted out. There is an Expansion Board gadget which takes me to a screen which contains no expansion boards even though I have one (a sound blaster) in my system. Finally, there are the Boot and Boot With No Startup-Sequence gadgets which work as advertised.

As intended, OS4 has the look and feel of OS3.9, but there are a few new things in it. Understand that this is by no means an exhaustive list, but just some of the things that caught my attention.

In the Prefs drawer there is an icon called Workbench which allows you to create and format your own title bar. It gives you a line into which you can put fixed text and then depending upon where the cursor is, you can insert various things about your system. This includes the amount, type, and unit of memory, the release number of Kickstart and Workbench, the version number of Kickstart and Workbench, the cpu type, and the graphic board type. This also gives you the ability to hide devices if you so choose and to display a volume gauge.

In the System drawer there is an icon called FormatCDRW. I assume that this will ultimately give us the ability to format a CDRW, but at the moment everything is ghosted out.

In the Tools drawer there is an icon called Media Toolbox. This is the replacement for HDToolbox. When entering it, it asks you to select a device. On my system there is only one device which is identified as a1ide.device. After double clicking on the device, a screen is displayed which shows all the devices that are found. In my case it found a device called WDC (Western Digital hard drive) which was located at id0, lun0 and a device called Lite-on (Lite-On CDRW drive) which was located at id2, lun0. If you select one of the devices, you can then click on the "Edit DB/Reinstall" gadget or click on the "Edit Partitions and File Systems" gadget. I have not gone any further than this for fear of doing something bad and irreversible to my system. Once I am able to back up my system, I hope to explore this further.

In the Tools drawer there is an icon called PlayCD. This

does what it says. It throws up a window giving you all of the typical things you might expect to play an audio CD. There are gadgets to play, stop, pause, rewind, fast forward, and eject. There is a volume slider and gadgets to select each of the tracks that it finds on the CD.

In the Utilities drawer there is an icon called AmiPDF. This is a PDF viewer. I have tested it on some PDF files. It seems to work fine if a little bit slow at times.

In the Utilities drawer there is an icon called Action. This appears to be a player for AVI, MOV, and QT files. I do not have any such files on my system and have not tested this yet but will be doing so in the near future.

Some productivity programs which work are ARexx and SAS/C Compiler version 6.50. Some classic games which

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May Calendar

May 10 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 pm — University Center, Pedernales Room
W. First St. & S. West St., Arlington

May 10 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 10:00 pm — TGI Fridays
Cooper Street just south of I-20, Arlington

May 20 — Amiga North Dallas Chapter
7:30 pm — Junkins Building, SMU
Dyer and Airline Extension Rd., Dallas

May 23 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

still work are HBMonopoly, Snakepit, The Mill, Welltrix, and Yahzee1.1.

My biggest disappointments in terms of software which I use frequently and that doesn't seem to work at the moment are CygnusEd Professional version 3.5, KingCON version 1.3, and Absoft FORTRAN 77 Compiler version 2.3 (executables compiled on my A4000 continue to run).

In conclusion, I think that this looks very promising. I am looking forward to receiving the official Beta CD which has recently been finalized and installing that on my system. That CD should have on it documentation files and some of the development tools such as the GCC compiler — both of which I am currently lacking.

...Ned Kelly